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# USING MINERVA AND OTHER MHS ONLINE OFFERINGS

BY JAMIE RICE AND HOLLY HURD-FORSYTH

**M**INERVA is a shared OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog) consisting of over fifty libraries throughout the state of Maine. As a subdivision of Maine Infonet, Minerva provides access to the holding records of participating institutions, including the Maine Historical Society. Other OPACs in Maine include URSUS and Solar, as well as MaineCat which is an umbrella catalog including records in Minerva, URSUS, and Solar — for one stop searching. Minerva's automated library database has replaced the traditional card catalog system in the Brown Research Library at Maine Historical Society. A multi-year effort by MHS's cataloging staff, referred to as the "Retrospective Conversion Project," transferred the content from card format to the bibliographic database Minerva.

This database is available free online via the Maine Historical Society's website or through the home URL for Minerva. The Maine Historical Society's website offers an interface that will automatically limit the search to the Society's holdings ([www.mainehistory.org/catalog](http://www.mainehistory.org/catalog)). This option is accessible under the "Brown Library" portion of the Society's website and by selecting "search the catalog" down the left hand side of the screen under the "Library & Research" heading. To access Minerva from the home URL (<http://minerva.maine.edu/search>), the patron should limit the search to the respective institution by using the drop-down menu to the right of the search screen.

The use of the catalog does not require a member of the Society to log in and can be used regardless of membership status. Minerva is supported by the Maine State Library, which provides technical support and training to MHS' technical services staff.

Minerva includes the bibliographic records for all holdings within the Brown Research Library. This includes printed materials, such as books, pamphlets, journals, and newspapers, as well as manuscript collections, maps, photograph collections, architectural and engineering collections, and scrapbooks. Regardless of the format, be it typescript, diary, ship log or newspaper, Minerva acts as the means to obtain the

necessary information for retrieval — the call number — which may then be provided to the library staff or retrieved by patrons, depending on the shelf location.

Library bibliographic records — MARC (Machine Readable Cataloging records) as they are called by librarians — include information about a work. Author, title, subjects, publication information, call numbers, and a brief description are often the included details. Manuscript or unpublished material titles may be less traditional, and patrons should be creative when searching. Author's names are listed in a "last name first, first name last" fashion and traditionally stem from what is called the authority file at the Library of Congress. The authority file establishes the authorized spelling and form of an author or subject's name. Person's names may include a birth and death date (if known) to help differentiate between those with similar names. MARC records, which appear in a public-display view in Minerva, are highly technical, with careful attention to punctuation and authority files. While it is true not every name or place appears in the LC authorities, efforts are made to remain consistent, allowing for better search results.

MARC records are only a description of a work and do not provide text meaning, full copies of books or manuscripts, or digital copies of photographs. This is not the nature of a library catalog. Patrons are expected to visit the Society's library to gain access to the holdings. Minerva simply provides a call number for retrieval and alerts the patron to holdings that may or may not be useful for their research. Other means of accessing Maine Historical Society materials in digital versions online exist, such as Maine Memory Network or more universal methods like Google Books, but Minerva is not meant to provide complete access to holdings; it is more correctly a guide to what is available at the library. Some libraries provide links to digital versions of the holdings via MARC records. Maine Historical Society does so when a map is digitized on the Maine Memory Network, for example. It should not be expected that holdings in the catalog are downloadable from Minerva. It should also be understood that Minerva lists holdings at the collection level, meaning individual volumes of a collection are not listed in such records; nor are individual photographs listed. Other sources at MHS may be used for this type of detail, such as finding aids, Maine Memory Network, or Past Perfect Online.



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### Maine Memory Network

Developed and managed by the Maine Historical Society, the Maine Memory Network (MMN) enables historical societies, libraries, and other cultural institutions across the state to upload, catalog, and manage digital copies of historical items from their collections in one centralized, web-accessible database. Maine Memory Network may be found at [www.mainememory.net](http://www.mainememory.net).

This online digital museum is a consortium, including selected holdings not only from Maine Historical Society, but from over 210 repositories around the state. The website offers digital collections, transcriptions, exhibits, and educational tools. As a research tool, MMN can be used to browse and view digital copies of *some of* the holdings of the Brown Library at MHS, the Maine Historical Society museum, and the MMN Contributing Partners.

Using the search feature, patrons may enter keywords for items such as photographs, maps, correspondence, paintings, costumes, and textiles. As a library tool, patrons may access digitized versions of collec-



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tions. In some instances, transcriptions accompany documents in a PDF format. The records for each item include a brief description, as well as the holding repository and local call numbers. Patrons should refer to the contact information included in each record for additional information about where to find the item. MMN is an online museum, featuring items from within the collections, and should not be seen as a comprehensive catalogue of holdings at a repository. Often, items are selected for their visual quality or popularity. The staff of the holding repository should be consulted for additional information, or for similar items and collections.

Unlike the library catalog Minerva, MMN allows patrons to browse at the item level. Single photographs or pieces of correspondence, which may be embedded in larger collections, will be found online, versus at the collection level in the Minerva. For example, the Maine Historical Society organizes its single photographs by location (town, street, etc). These collections are not reflected in the library catalog, as they are artificial in nature, and are constantly growing and updated. Maine Memory Network acts a showcase for some images that would not be searchable in the library catalog. Again, it is important to understand that the Maine Memory Network is not a comprehensive listing of all MHS' holdings, and many items on MMN are from other repositories. The MMN records themselves help determine which repository holds an item and indicate local codes and call numbers, as well as details about the items displayed. This website should be used as a companion to Minerva.

### **Vintage Maine Images**

Vintage Maine Images is the "for-profit," e-commerce site for the Maine Memory Network. This website allows patrons to purchase images online or order hard-copy prints from the Society. Many images found on the MMN may be found on Vintage Maine Images, but not all. MMN Contributing Partners may also broker their images on Vintage Maine Images via the Maine Historical Society. For further details regarding publication and ordering prints, please contact the MHS's Image Services Department. Vintage Maine Images may be found at [www.vintagemaineimages.com](http://www.vintagemaineimages.com).

### **PastPerfect Online**

Since 1822, Maine Historical Society has collected and cataloged artifacts that illuminate the history of Maine. These artifacts have always been held in the public trust, and were available for study by researchers. Particularly interesting and well-documented objects were exhibited, and sometimes photographed and published. The material was preserved, but people had to know where to look for it, and usually had to travel in person to see it.

Now, MHS museum catalog records can be viewed online by anyone, anytime. Since 2007, collections staff have been converting the museum catalog into a searchable online database called PastPerfect Online. At present, PastPerfect Online contains over 32,000 records, including the entire museum catalog as well as a partial catalog of our photograph collection and selected architectural drawings. There are full transcriptions of letters from both the Fogg Collection and the Northeast Boundary Collection. Over 22,000 images accompany these records, so you can see what is being described. With both keyword and advanced search options, you can conduct a very general search (“World War I,” for example) or drill down to a very specific topic (artist “Pratt, Henry Cheever” and date “1825”). Clicking the “Random Images” button is an easy way to experience the incredible diversity of the MHS collections. You can also order images, email pages to friends, and provide feedback if you have information to share.

You’ll find this catalog at <http://mainehistory.pastperfect-online.com/>. It can also be accessed from the Online Resources section of our website at [http://www.mainehistory.org/online\\_resources.shtml](http://www.mainehistory.org/online_resources.shtml). As our collections grow, so does the catalog, so bookmark the page and visit often!